

Jermain Defoe

UP FRONT AND PERSONAL



▲ **WINNERS** Modric and Bentley celebrate in the cup

We're really up for it

CONGRATULATIONS to my Spurs team-mates for getting through what was a tough FA Cup quarter-final against Fulham.

It was a massive win for us against a tough, well-organised side that have done superbly in the competition and in the Europa League.

In the circumstances, to come back from going a goal down to Bobby Zamora's superb strike was a fantastic achievement.

I watched the game from a box at the ground with my family and had the TV on to keep tabs on Premier League scores. Everton's win over Manchester City and Sunderland's point at Aston Villa were both brilliant results for us. We now have a great chance to finish in the Champions League places.

As you can imagine, it was quite hard for me to focus on what was happening on the pitch. I think that will be the same for the players and staff for the rest of the season.

We'll all have one eye on what's going on with the teams directly below us in the race for the top four, but we will, of course, be focusing on doing our own jobs.

Mancini lets passion rule

IT'S easy to criticise Roberto Mancini for his fight with Everton boss David Moyes on Wednesday night.

But it showed the passion that I believe fans like to see in football.

The scenes at Eastlands between Mancini (right) and Moyes weren't good for kids watching or for the image of the game.

But both men want to do well for their clubs and I don't think that's a bad thing.

As players you might say or do things on the pitch that you wouldn't otherwise. But the same thing applies. You're fired up because the stakes are high and you want to come out on top.

Mancini will have been fired up before the game and so it is only normal that emotions sometimes boil over.



AIR TO THE THRONE

Jermain Defoe is using an oxygen tent – which, of course, looks nothing like this! – to speed up his recovery from injury



▲ **DOWNER** Relegation with West Ham was a painful time

Drop was a real Hammer blow for me

I KNOW the pain of being relegated as I played in the West Ham side that went down in 2003.

Ironically, our form was superb towards the end of the season with three wins and a draw from our last four games. But we had left ourselves with too much to do and it was heartbreaking.

There were times when we felt as low as the current West Ham players do now – particularly in January after defeats by Arsenal and Charlton were followed by Manchester United thrashing us 6-0 in the FA Cup.

The squad we had then was full of internationals, much better than the one they have now. We had Carrick, Cole, Kanoute, Di Canio and Glen Johnson.

No-one could believe we were in such a bad situation and it is sad to see the lowly state the club is in now. I grew up in east London and I came through the West Ham academy.

I loved my time there and I still want West Ham to win, even though I get a lot of stick from fans when I go back to watch them.

When I was a kid playing for the club, the fans were brilliant to me. So I desperately want them to stay up and I believe they can.

When morale drops, it's hard to pick yourself up because football is very much a confidence game.

If you let the pressure get to you as a player then you get tight and tense and your game deteriorates.

I just hope they keep their nerve and perform well because the consequences of relegation don't bear thinking about.

Although the fans gave them some fearful stick on Tuesday, they will get back behind the team on Saturday – particularly if they know the players are willing to give everything for the cause.

I don't know James Tomkins (left), but he must be talented to break through at such a young age.

I was 20 when we went down and it was a difficult time for me too. Nobody's perfect. The good thing about football is that there is always the next game and he should just focus on that.

Everyone makes mistakes, what matters is how you recover from them. We were lucky in that the older players in the squad helped us younger lads through it. We also had Sir Trevor Brooking, who was fantastic with his ability to keep everything in perspective.

I've really become a player with altitude

THESE DAYS my nights feel as though I am sleeping in the mountains.

That's because I have bought myself an altitude chamber to help with my hamstring injury. I sleep in there when I am not playing so that when I do come back my fitness is really good.

The tent is over my bed so when I go to sleep, like I said, it feels as though I am sleeping in the mountains.

There is less oxygen in there. When I come back playing, I effectively return to sea level and when I run my recovery is quicker.

Lance Armstrong and all the top cyclists use the same thing. In fact Lance has been doing it for years.

I've had the tent in my bedroom for a couple of weeks now. It was something that I'd always wanted to do because when I suffered a broken foot last year I did all my rehab in an altitude room.

I managed to return very quickly and when I came back I felt a lot stronger. Boxers use an

altitude chamber when they are training before fights.

I'd always wanted to get one myself, so after I got back to my full fitness I decided that I would get one.

At this stage of the season a lot of players suffer from fatigue so an altitude tent is perfect for me and will make sure that I finish the season strongly.

This week I've been coming in every day early in the morning for a massage. The injury that has

kept me out of Tottenham's last two games is not a major one but you can't rush it. You really do have to be careful because we are reaching the climax of a massive season with the World Cup at the end of it.

But I must be a nightmare for the physios.

Most of the time I have something like five of them around me, almost trying to pin me down because I am raring to go and they know what I'm like.

If I can't train it really gets to me but to be fair to them they always tell me: "We love it when you argue with us because it shows us that you want to train and play – not come in and sit around in the treatment room."

I spent Wednesday doing weights and strengthening exercises and, to be honest, my hamstring feels fine. It doesn't feel as though I have a tear in my muscle.

I speak to the manager Harry Redknapp every day. He asks about my progress and he's always telling me to be careful because there are important games coming up.

Both he and I share the opinion that even though it might feel fine we want to give it as long as it needs. So it's just 50-50 whether I play on Saturday.

I don't want to come back half-fit, injure it further and put myself out for even longer.

Goals keep me in the pink

MY SUPERSTITIONS put me in the doghouse a couple of months ago with my boot sponsors adidas.

Whenever the new colour comes out, us players are supposed to wear it. And I was supposed to sport the new green one.

But when I scored my five goals in our 9-1 win over Wigan in November (inset) I was wearing the silvery-pink ones. So I got a call from adidas

telling me that I had to wear the green ones – but they know what I'm like.

Because I'd got the five goals in the silvery-pink ones I'd decided I had to keep wearing them – and I did. But then a lot of players do that.

I've got loads of superstitions. Before the Wigan game I slept in my spare room in my house. So now I sleep there before every game.

